

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE OF
THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN WASHINGTON, DC



MAY 31, 2011

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Arab League to seek full U.N. membership for Palestine

The Arab League announced on May 28 that it will seek full United Nations membership for a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The declaration came after a meeting of the Ministerial Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative in Doha. The Committee made its decision after reviewing the speech delivered by U.S. President Barack Obama on May 19 and the subsequent response of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the U.S. Congress on May 24. The Arab League expressed its appreciation for the position of President Obama that peace should be based on a two-state solution and the 1967 borders. The League rejected the assertions of Prime Minister Netanyahu, claiming that he has "interrupted the path towards making any progress in the achievement of peace." The statement called upon the U.S. Congress to keep to a balanced attitude to protect U.S. interests and role peacemaker.

SAUDI ARABIA

Country celebrates sixth anniversary of the accession of King Abdullah

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz on May 28 was congratulated on the sixth anniversary of his ascent to the throne, according to the Islamic calendar. King Abdullah was commended for the major achievements, developmental strides and modernization initiatives witnessed under his leadership that have moved the Kingdom into the ranks of advanced countries.

King Abdullah ascended the throne on 25 Jumada al-Thani 1426 H [August 1, 2005], after the death of King Fahd bin Abdulaziz.

Majlis Al-Shoura approves judicial reforms

During its meeting in Riyadh on May 31, the Majlis Al-Shoura (Consultative Council) tasked the Ministry of Justice with drawing up regulations and setting safeguards to prevent the marriage of underage girls. The Majlis also approved judicial and administrative formations for courts, new judicial districts and notaries. In a statement, Secretary General Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Ghamdi

2011 JUN -9 PM 1:13

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said that the council is following the intentions of King Abdullah to reinvigorate the judiciary and to promote and support judicial reforms.

FOREIGN AID

IIRISA medical services benefit 345,000 patients in 27 countries

The International Islamic Relief Organization of Saudi Arabia (IIRISA), an affiliate of the Muslim World League (MWL), has provided medical services benefiting 345,000 patients in 27 Asian, African and European countries. According to IIRISA Secretary-General Dr. Adnan bin Khalil Basha, the organization has also assisted in more than 47 health projects, including the construction of four hospitals, 20 dispensaries, three clinics, four specialized centers and a pharmacy. IIRISA has contributed to the treatment of a large number of patients suffering from diseases such as malaria, typhoid, bilharzias, tuberculosis and others, the Secretary-General noted. He added that the organization has provided these projects with qualified medical professionals, including 184 doctors, nurses and paramedical staff, as well as large quantities of medicines and medical devices.

OPEC Fund extends humanitarian assistance to Libyan refugees

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) issued a press release on May 30 announcing the approval of a US\$500,000 grant to assist Libyan refugees. According to the statement, "The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) approved a second emergency assistance grant of US\$500,000 in aid for Libyans affected by the crisis in the country. The grant, to be channeled through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), will help in the provision of the essential food and non-food supplies to Libyan refugees in Tunisia." The first US\$500,000 grant, approved by the OFID in March, was channeled through the World Food Program (WFP).

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MAY 24, 2011

TERRORISM

King Abdullah calls family of killed Saudi diplomat

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz telephoned Misfer Al-Qahtani on May 17 to express his condolences and sympathy for the death of his son, Sgt. Maj. Hassan Al-Qahtani, who was a staff member of the Saudi Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan. Earlier, Maj. Gen. Muhammad Al-Omani, commander of the Special Security Forces, visited the family of Sgt. Maj. Al-Qahtani and conveyed the condolences of Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, and those of Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Minister of Interior. Maj. Gen. Al-Omani presented the family with a check for SR 100,000 (\$26,667) as emergency assistance to the family.

Brig. Abdullah Al-Thumali, Director of Public Relations for the Special Security Forces, said a number of royal decrees have been issued pertaining to Sgt. Maj. Al-Qahtani's family: Sgt. Maj. Al-Qahtani has been posthumously promoted to the next rank; his family will continue to receive his full salary and benefits; he will be awarded the King Abdul-Aziz Medal, Third Class, in addition the Medal of Honor. Sgt. Maj. Al-Qahtani's family will receive a house worth up to SR 500,000 (\$133,334) in a location of their choosing; his parents will each receive a monthly stipend of SR 3,000 (\$800); and the government will payoff any of Sgt. Maj. Al-Qahtani's debts, if any, up to SR 500,000 (\$133,334).

The body of Sgt. Maj. Hassan Al-Qahtani was received at King Khalid International Airport on May 16 by Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz, Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs; Prince Khalid bin Saud bin Khalid, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Ambassador Alaa El-Din Al-Askari, Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Protocol Affairs. Sgt. Maj. Al-Qahtani's body arrived in Riyadh on a private plane accompanied by the Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Abdulaziz Al-Ghadeer.

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah makes new appointments

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz issued a number of royal decrees on May 20 making the following changes: relieving President of the Court of Grievances Sheikh Ibrahim bin Shaya Al-Huqail from his post and appointing Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Nassar as President of the Court of Grievances at the rank of a minister; relieving Deputy Minister of

Higher Education Dr. Ali bin Suleiman Al-Attiyah from his post and appointing Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Seef, Director of Ha'il University, as Deputy Minister of Higher Education at the excellent rank; and appointing Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Darrab as Governor of the Communication and Information Technology Commission at the excellent rank.

King Abdullah accepted the retirement of Chief of the General Staff Field Marshal Saleh Al-Muhaya and appointed his Deputy Lieutenant General Hussein bin Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Qabeel Chief of the General Staff with the rank of Field Marshal; appointed Commander of Ground Forces Lieutenant General Abdurrahman bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Murshid Deputy Chief of the General Staff, and promoted Major General Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz to the rank of Lieutenant General and appointed him Commander of Ground Forces.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

GCC suspends Yemen peace initiative

Saudi Arabia announced on May 23 that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has suspended its initiative to resolve the crisis in Yemen for a lack of appropriate circumstances for its approval. The Kingdom expressed hope that all parties will sign the initiative as soon as possible to ensure the implementation of the agreement, overcome the crisis in Yemen and achieve comprehensive consensus that maintains security and stability in that country.

SAUDI – U.S. RELATIONS

Saudi Embassy hosts Saudi-U.S. health symposium

The Saudi Arabia Embassy hosted the second annual Saudi-U.S. Health Bridge Symposium on May 24. The symposium was sponsored by the General Directorate of Medical Services Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia and the Medical Services Section Armed Forces of the United States. The conference was developed to help physicians from both nations build a larger network of doctors for use on international and domestic levels. Together, they work to determine how to enhance medical care around the world, improve clinical performance outcomes and build bridges to solve global health care issues.

"We are very proud of our Saudi students and our officers who have gone through the first envoy program," said Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir while addressing the audience. "It is truly a bridge between our two countries and it is a bridge that prepares people for healing and extending life and improving quality of life."